

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MARCH 29, 2001

VOL. 125

No. 8

## Baptist pastor lands in midst of tragedy

SANTEE, Calif. (BP) — The morning of March 5 started out in a fairly usual manner for Phil Herrington, pastor of the Pathways Community Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in the San Diego suburb of Santee.

Monday is traditionally Herrington's day. He usually spends his morning quietly sipping coffee and reading his Bible in the backyard of his family's home. That's where Herrington was on the morning of March 5 when the solitude of his study time was interrupted by a chorus of sirens.

The father of three, who also happens to be the area chaplain for the San Diego Sheriff's Dept., on instinct got up and walked inside. The constant wailing of sirens was evidence of a bad situation and Herrington waited for the phone to ring — and it did.

Within minutes, Herrington suited up in his sheriff's department jacket and headed to Santana High School. It was less than 30 minutes after Andy Williams had begun his murderous rampage.

"It was a war zone. The paramedics had already set up a triage unit and were assisting the most seriously wounded. The two boys who were mortally wounded were still there. There was blood everywhere. I've never been to a violent crime scene before, but it seemed like everything was in slow motion."

The first student Herrington saw was a familiar one — James Jackson, 19, a member of Herrington's church. The young

man, who played football for the Santana Sultans, had been shot in the hip.

Herrington assisted paramedics by holding Jackson's I.V. bag. He also prayed with the injured teenager.

They were sitting in a booth inside a restaurant.

The Gordons, who Herrington said are unchurched, were escorted from the restaurant in an unmarked car and taken to their home. "I followed them home and they asked me to stay with them," he said. "Within a few hours my role shifted from being a chaplain to being their pastor."

Herrington said the family has been showered with love and attention from the entire community.

"We're going to try and cultivate a relationship with them and maybe see them come to faith," he said.

On March 10, Herrington conducted the funeral and memorial service of their son.

For Herrington, the events of the past week have been tragic and tumultuous — for both the school and the community.

"I suppose it really hit me the day after the shooting," he said. "It wasn't post traumatic syndrome, but I really felt drained."

Herrington said he has plans to call Al Meredith, pastor of Wedgwood Church in Fort Worth, Texas, for advice on dealing with the tragedy. More than one year ago, a gunman opened fire on worshippers at Wedgwood, killing students and adults.

"Over the long haul, we are going to be here ministering and counseling not only students, but also adults," Herrington said, "and I wouldn't be surprised if people are drawn to the church as a result of what happened at Santana."



ANOTHER TRAGEDY — A rifle-wielding police officer attempts to clear the area minutes after gunshots rang out March 5 at Santana High School in the San Diego suburb of Santee. (Photo by Zuma Press)

"James wanted me to call his grandmother and tell her that he was OK and I did," Herrington added.

Soon after, Herrington was chosen to accompany a group of sheriff's department officials who had to deliver a death notification to Mary and Stan Gordon, parents of one of the two fatalities.

## Southern Baptists unite in shocked community

SANTEE, Calif. (BP) — The Southern Baptists in Santee, Calif., a bedroom community outside San Diego, are a small but faithful band of believers — but in the days following the shootings at Santana High School they have united to reach out to an unchurched community, providing spiritual solutions to the area's woes.

"The response from the Southern Baptist community has been remarkable," said Terrell Eldreth, pastor of the Carlton Hills Southern Baptist Church in Santee. "Three of our churches here provided crisis counseling not only in churches but even at our Santee Youth Center."

Everyone in his small congregation has been touched by the tragedy at Santana High School — even the senior adults, Eldreth said. On March 7, a group of senior adults filled a pew at

Carlton Hills during a youth worship and prayer service for the victims of the tragedy.

"I think it sends a powerful statement to our young people when the seniors are coming out to show their support for teenagers," Eldreth said. "But they were also coming for themselves. Many of them wonder what has happened in our society that would allow a teenager to murder his classmates."

Eldreth's son, Tim, a sophomore at Santana High School, wonders, too. The 16-year-old boy is a center on the school's football team. He is also a strong believer in Christ.

"As soon as I heard the gunfire, I immediately thought about Columbine High School and that girl [Cassie Bernall]," the younger Eldreth recalled.

"At the time, none of us knew why the guy was shoot-

ing and I wondered if maybe he was targeting Christians. I was sitting in that classroom wondering if I would be able to stand up and say I was a believer," he said. "It sure drew a whole lot of respect for her [Bernall]."

The younger Eldreth said he sees his responsibility as a Christian in a new light. "This is a time to witness," he said. "I think this has made me stronger, and I think the Christian community here will get stronger, too."

Dave Brock, the youth pastor at Carlton Hills, said he believes the shooting at Santana will lead to a spiritual awakening in the community.

"My desire is to see all of San Diego come together and like a wildfire it would spread," said the 22-year-old minister. "I'm excited in the spirit knowing

that God will be glorified through this."

Phil Herrington, pastor of the nearby Pathways Community Church and one of the first chaplains on the scene of the shootings, said he found strength during the crisis among his Southern Baptist brothers and the local association of Baptist churches.

"Some of the first calls I got were from the association (San Diego Association) wanting to know what they could do to help," Herrington said. "Our association spent Wednesday night delivering materials to our churches to help us."

"To me, being a Southern Baptist means there is some foundational support we can go to during crisis," he said. "We have the autonomy of the local church, yet cooperation is really true. It works."

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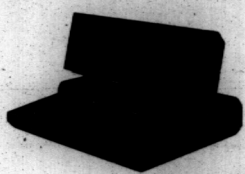
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530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Send  
news, communication, and address  
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RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS  
39205-0530 (601) 968-3800  
Fax: (601) 292-3330  
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org**

VOLUME 125 NUMBER 8  
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4  
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist  
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,  
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per  
year payable in advance. Economy plans  
available for cooperating Mississippi  
churches. Periodicals postage paid at  
Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State  
Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items —  
one calendar week prior to requested pub-  
lication date. Advertising — two calendar  
weeks prior to requested publication date.

# Wolves in sheep's clothing

**W**atch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.  
Matt. 7:15 (NIV)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:27 (NIV)

We were warned. There have been many false prophets through the ages, and Mississippi was visited a couple of weeks ago by one of the most artful of all time.

Sun Myung Moon, founder of the heretical Unification Church who considers his wife and himself to be the "True Parents" of the human race and on an equal footing with Jesus Christ, stopped in Jackson March 17 to deliver a sermon to 800 people packed into the cavernous ballroom at the Hilton Hotel in Jackson.

The Jackson event was part of the 81-year-old Moon's current 50-state tour titled, "We Will Stand!" and subtitled "Rebuild the Family/Restore the Community/Renew the Nation and World."

Yes, the man who is responsible for splitting an uncountable number of families — and holds mass weddings for tens of thousands of other couples who barely know each other — has now embarked on a quest to save that which he helped destroy.

However, the grandiose talk of the past was noticeably absent in his Jackson appearance, as were any references to the Unification Church. The Jackson event was even purportedly sponsored by groups named, "The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification," and "The American Clergy Leadership Conference."

Moon did not refer to himself as the completion of the Second Coming, as he has in the past. The phrase "True Parents" was not uttered, although they were defer-



Sun Myung Moon in Jackson on March 17

entially described as "Father and Mother" by other speakers.

There was no mention of Moon's legendary mountaintop meeting with Jesus where, according to Moon, Jesus pleaded with him to complete what he (Jesus) could not and bring about the Last Days.

However, there was still plenty of bizarre doctrine — and tellingly, there was no Christian flag to accompany the U.S. flag that was on the stage beside Moon.

Moon's carefully crafted remarks centered on racial reconciliation and breaking down the barriers that separate religious people.

"God so loved the world," he said, "not a denomination or a religion. God does not discriminate against religions." That will come as a surprise to most Christians.

Speaking for nearly two hours, Moon advocated mixed marriages as a "shortcut

to harmony and peace," and repeatedly made obscure references to male and female "love organs" and the mating of different-colored bears.

He spoke about something he called "the flow of civilization" and recounted "my role in history."

"It seems like only yesterday that I stood on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan and wept openly as I held on to God to keep him from leaving America," Moon recounted.

Moon and many others like him are smooth talkers, but we must not let down our guard. We must not ignore the words of our Savior and biblical writers regarding false prophets; if we do, we are at great risk of losing our mandate (Matt. 28: 18-20).

We'd best keep our eyes on the real prize, or God will remove it from us in favor of someone who will.

## GUEST OPINION:

### Aisle rage

By Charles Marx, member  
Temple Church, Hattiesburg

**M**y wife and I enjoy church and attend on a regular basis. "Church" is a place of worship and inspiration for those attending — or, at least it should be.

Have you ever noticed that any establishment with aisles is generally attended by the exact number of persons it takes to block the aisles, plus two? The two, of course, being you and your companion. I guess it is a pet peeve of mine, but an aisle by definition is a passageway. It is not the place to visit, renew acquaintance, plan an outing, conduct a courtship, have a fashion show, or in general to observe the world passing by — or at least trying to pass.

Church is one of the worst places that aisle blockers congregate. I believe they must go to church to practice how to block aisles effectively. It is almost as though it were a challenge to see how fast one can exit a pew and form an offensive (or defensive) line. I would not be too shocked to see a three point stance adopted by those obviously intent on stopping an exodus.

I have just been fed a healthy dose of reminders as to how I should properly relate to others. Alternatively, I have been admonished for my past mis-

treatment of others. I have resolved that with the Lord's help I will be more tolerant of others. On occasion I have even decided to extend an apology to someone I intentionally berated or just snapped at in a fit of temper. The pastor spent considerable time in preparing his message so as to convey the Lord's command to "love one another." No doubt he would be pleased at my thoughts of the moment.

The service is over and it is time to exit the building. Now the blockers move into the aisles and man their stations. There goes my resolve! I haven't even made it out of the pew, much less the building, and already I need to sit down and go back over the sermon.

Who is it that leads this group in their devious plot to deny me a worship experience? I think Satan must be incensed that I may have gotten my

heart in tune with the Lord and is determined that it is not to be. Wait, the pastor and his associates have made their way to the exits during the benediction and are now having a miniature visitation program in the doorways. The selfsame man who turned my thinking toward loving my fellow man is now helping to hold me hostage in a sustained gridlock — and I'm hungry!

Should the service have been "packed" and those in charge try to accommodate the overflow crowd by placing chairs in the aisles, the Fire Marshal would have a conniption fit. Where is the Fire Marshal when Mrs. X and Mrs. Y are deciding where to go for lunch, as they stand in the aisle with husbands dutifully standing beside or behind each? Whichever position is required to make a successful block by them. "Oh lets

not go there. The last time I had the (fill in the blank) and it was simply horrible." "Their service has just faltered beyond impossible. Have you tried this darling little place out by the lake?" Yeah, why not go to the lake and drown, and get out of the aisle!

In my perfect world every aisle will have a widened pull-off for those who aren't ready to leave just yet. Fellowship and enjoy, but leave the aisle open. I have given some thought to a possible fly-over but that would require too much energy to negotiate in my starving condition. Besides it would be too easily blocked. I confess some thought has also been given to a Zap gun, but it would leave a mess where the aisle blocker once stood — and this is church!

Until we reach that perfect place, please try to realize that you are blocking the exit or entrance of others. Thank you for standing aside. Let's go to church and worship. Then leave while still inspired to love one another. For my part, I will try to carry the message outside the church.

At least until I pull into traffic.

*Editor's note: Marx authors the weekly Bibliocipher puzzle in The Baptist Record.*



# Boomers using '30-year bonus' for Jesus

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Two scenes recently witnessed by a reporter:

- An investment counselor asks a group of Christian workers what they want from retirement. "Not to have to work!" one quickly replies. Another looks forward to traveling. A third responds: "I just want to maintain my standard of living."

- A middle-aged Southern Baptist on a volunteer mission trip stands on a street corner in a city teeming with millions of people — but only a handful of Christians. A successful businessman and smart investor, he's already thinking early retirement. He whispers to a fellow volunteer, "My wife and I could move here" — and help reach this lost megacity for Christ.

What's wrong with the first scene? Nothing. The answers are what you would expect from folks hoping for a secure, enjoyable retirement — but the businessman in the second story wants more: to use his approaching freedom to go on mission with God.

America's 82 million baby boomers (born 1946-1964) are getting older. They started turning 50 in 1996. An estimated 21 million of them will have passed that milestone by the end of 2001, but time hasn't dimmed their desire to change the world or to be the "first generation" to do all kinds of things.

Thanks to the nation's long economic boom, they're certainly the first generation to be able to afford early retirement



**BONUS OPPORTUNITY** — Southern Baptist layman Bruce Robertson (right), 54, teaches English to high-level professionals in Bangkok, Thailand, and also ministers to prison inmates. Robertson and his wife Bonnie were both successful in business before God called them to Thailand as two-year International Service Corps workers through the International Mission Board in 1996. After finishing the two-year term they returned as four-year missionary associates. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

in significant numbers. They also are the first generation to seriously challenge the whole concept of aging.

Average life expectancy for Americans is nearing 80 years — up from 47 a century ago. Millions of older boomers are healthy and well off, and that gives them many choices of how to spend their extra years.

In his recent book *The Third Age: 6 Principles for Growth and Renewal after Forty*, William Sadler calls this gift of time a 30-year "life bonus." He spent years studying people who've decided to pursue an exciting "second growth" rather than accepting traditional notions of late middle age.

"If we come under the spell of aging, we will set aside ambition, anticipation, passion, idealism, and discovery," Sadler writes. "I

contend that we should not deny aging, but rather transform it with a new growth process.

"We have the chance to create a second half of life that is very different from what our parents or grandparents experienced. Instead of being diminished by time, our lives can become richer. It all depends on how we spend it... This constitutes the third age, a new frontier with tremendous potential for growth."

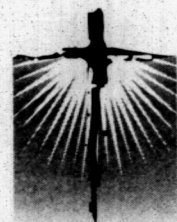
More than four million American boomers over age 50 are evangelical Christians, according to Finishers Project, an agency that mobilizes boomers for missions. Many of those are Southern Baptists, and International Mission Board (IMB) enlistment specialists are eager to tell them about service opportunities.

"The 50-65 age group is one we're really focusing on, because that's going to be the largest segment of our population in the next 15 years," says Randy Rains, IMB associate

vice president for mission personnel. "A lot of these folks are at a point where their children are launched from home, and they don't have to worry about the money thing anymore. Their drive is to do something meaningful."

One man counseled by Rains had completed a military career, then quickly risen from managing a retail store department to overseeing the whole store. "He's in his early 50s, has lots of logistical and administrative skills, but told me, 'There's got to be more to life than managing a retail store.' So he and his wife are going to Africa," Rains said.

The IMB Masters Program, introduced in 1999, is designed for Southern Baptists like him: age 50 and over, sensing God's leading toward missions, and willing to serve a two- or three-year term. More than 230 Masters had been approved for service by late 2000.



MISSISSIPPI  
**BAPTISTS**

**THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE**

**Record**

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MARCH 29, 2001

VOL. 125

No. 8

## Bill urges peace in Sudan

WASHINGTON (BP) — Legislation designed to further the United States' involvement in helping end a Sudanese campaign marked by religious persecution has been reintroduced in Congress. The Sudan Peace Act not only condemns the Khartoum government's support of mass violations of human rights, including the trade in slaves, but it calls for the United States to take specific steps in providing relief to victims of the militant Islamic regime and in promoting the peace process. More than 2 million people have died and more than 4 million have been displaced in a civil war that has lasted for more than 17 years in the African country. In recent years, the Sudanese government has been identified as one of the world's worst perpetrators of religious persecution. Last May, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom described Sudan as "the world's most violent abuser to the right to freedom of religion and belief" in its first report. The militant Islamic regime has conducted an ongoing campaign against Christian and animist villages in the central and southern parts of the country. Troops supported by Khartoum have regularly raided and burned such villages, killing the men and capturing women and children to be used or sold as slaves. The regime has conducted bombing campaigns against civilians, with Christian hospitals and schools among the targets.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

A small New Testament sent through the mail opens the door for two Southern Baptist evangelists to lead Manuel Noriega to profess faith in Jesus Christ. Noriega, deposed leader of Panama, says he became a Christian on May 15, 1990, while serving a federal sentence in Miami.

### 20 years ago

An eight-person Mississippi Baptist task force is dispatched to South America early in March to spend two weeks on a fact-finding mission. They return with information necessary to set in motion a partnership-in-missions program in cooperation with Baptists in Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina.

### 50 years ago

Following a mass meeting in Belzoni which organized a Christian Citizens' League, Sheriff W. B. Powell of Humphreys County warns violators of Mississippi's liquor and gambling laws in the small Delta county that they must "close up or be closed."



# CELEBRATE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM DAY

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2001

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 & BELOW

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
BERWICK/MISSISSIPPI	\$ 6,919
RIVERSIDE/GULF COAST	\$ 2,759
MCCARLEY/CARROLL	\$ 2,738
BARNES CROSSING/AT LARGE	\$ 2,726
MT PISGAH/CHOCTAW	\$ 2,659
MASHULAVILLE/NOXUBEE	\$ 2,536
PILGRIM'S REST/WEBSTER	\$ 2,531
SPRING HILL/CALHOUN	\$ 2,395
SHILOH/UNION	\$ 2,328
BEULAH/HOLMES	\$ 2,306

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 - \$39,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
VALLEY PARK/SHARKEY-ISSAQUENA	\$ 9,381
CENTER RIDGE/KEMPER	\$ 7,125
NEW HOPE/WEBSTER	\$ 7,011
ENON/WINSTON	\$ 6,568
LOLLARS GROVE/WEBSTER	\$ 6,487
HEBRON/PANOLA	\$ 5,685
NORTHSIDE/WARREN	\$ 5,232
UNION/FRANKLIN	\$ 4,997
JOHNS/RANKIN	\$ 4,809
PROGRESS/PIKE	\$ 4,774

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$40,000 - \$54,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
SPRING CREEK/NESHOBA	\$16,311
OLD HEBRON/COV-JEFF DAVIS	\$11,158
SABOUGLA/CALHOUN	\$ 8,960
LIBERTY/LAUDERDALE	\$ 7,978
CROSBY/MISSISSIPPI	\$ 7,551
OAK GROVE/YAZOO	\$ 6,808
MIDWAY/NEWTON	\$ 6,619
LOCKE STATION/PANOLA	\$ 6,515
WAYSIDE/YALOBUSHA	\$ 6,396
DEER CREEK/SHARKEY-ISSAQUENA	\$ 6,280

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$55,000 - \$74,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
HEBRON/NORTH CENTRAL	\$12,966
CONCORD/YAZOO	\$12,906
ORAL/LAMAR	\$12,096
SHUBUTA/CLARKE	\$11,942
FBC STATE LINE/WAYNE	\$10,991
OLDTOWN/CALHOUN	\$10,484
MCCOOL/ATTALA	\$ 9,683
EMMANUEL/MARION	\$ 9,425
MESA/WALTHALL	\$ 9,214
NEW LIBERTY/TISHOMINGO	\$ 9,058

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$75,000 - \$99,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC ANGUILLA INC/SHARKEY-ISSA.	\$17,263
CHERRY CREEK/PONTOTOC	\$17,125
CALVARY/WINSTON	\$16,751
CHESTER/CHOCTAW	\$16,248
DOUBLE SPRINGS/GOLDEN TRIANG.	\$16,025
FBC GALILEE/MISSISSIPPI	\$14,657
ROCK HILL/RANKIN	\$14,207
BOGUE CHITTO/LINCOLN	\$13,831
PILGRIMS REST/COPIAH	\$13,221
MT PISGAH/RANKIN	\$13,186

Church Offering Categories based on undesignated gifts reported on the Annual Church Profile

## Cooperative Program: the best there is

By Frank Harmon, pastor  
First Church, Newton

I grew up in a Southern Baptist Church. The Cooperative Program, missions, the Lottie Moon Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions, Royal Ambassadors, and many other Southern Baptist programs have always been a part of my understanding of the church.

I assumed that all churches were like my home church. That assumption was destroyed when I was a young pastor of a small church in rural Alabama.

One of my members asked me, "What is this Co-op-er-a-tive Program anyway?" The church had no formal budget; they paid the preacher and the bills, and supported a radio evangelist. They were fine people, but they'd never been informed that there was a better way of supporting missions at home and around the world.

My efforts, as a 20-year-old pastor, to answer their questions were not at all satisfying to me or to them. Finally, in answer to the ultimate question, "Just what does the Cooperative Program support?" I handed that deacon a copy of the Southern Baptist Convention annual and said, "Read this. It will answer all of your questions."

The next week he handed it back to me with a very puzzled look on his face. I understood at that point neither he nor I knew all the answers to the questions, but shortly thereafter the church voted to contribute a portion of its income to the Cooperative Program.

Since those early days in the ministry, my knowledge and understanding of the Cooperative Program has greatly increased. I've come to see it as the most effective and efficient denominational mission program in the world.

The Cooperative Program allows our church to fulfill the command of Christ — 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year — all around the world. There is no other plan that contains so many possibilities:

- As an individual giver, I can have a part in reaching people for Christ in 127 countries through the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

- Two hundred eighty thousand new believers were baptized and 2,050 churches were started around the world last year through the efforts of 4,300 international missionaries.

- Through the Cooperative Program I can also have a part in reaching our own nation. The Cooperative Program supports nearly 5,000 missionaries through the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

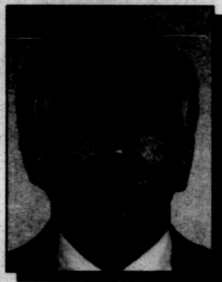
- My gifts to the Cooperative Program support the work of six Southern Baptist seminaries, the relief work of the Annuity Board, the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission, and many other entities of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, it does not end there.

- The largest portion of my gifts to the Cooperative Program stays right here in Mississippi. My dollars help support Christian education (three Baptist-affiliated colleges), state missions and evangelism, the Baptist Children's Village, our church growth ministries, our three assemblies and campgrounds, and much more.

There is no way that any one church can support such a comprehensive program of this magnitude. It takes all of us channeling our gifts through the Cooperative Program.

By joining together everyone can play a part in fulfilling Jesus' command to bring in the harvest. That's what the Cooperative Program is all about.

*Editor's note: Harmon will begin new duties on April 2 as director of the Church-Minister Relations Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. He replaces Louis Smith, who has announced his retirement.*



Harmon

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$100,000 - \$149,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
ECRU/PONTOTOC	\$38,936
CATO/RANKIN	\$29,102
SKENE/MID-DELTA	\$28,046
ELLISTOWN/UNION CO	\$26,406
BREWER/LEE	\$25,921
SYLVARENA/SMITH	\$25,133
CHUNKY/NEWTON	\$24,039
BETHSAIDA/MONTGOMERY	\$23,539
CLIFF TEMPLE/ADAMS	\$23,405
PERKINSTON/GULF COAST	\$21,574

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$150,000 - \$249,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
HICKORY/NEWTON	\$54,203
CARROLLTON/CARROLL	\$53,148
CROWDER/NORTH DELTA	\$48,741
PELAHATCHIE/RANKIN	\$47,320
DERMA/CALHOUN	\$41,569
FBC SARDIS/PANOLA	\$41,528
MEADOWVIEW/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	\$37,135
FBC ROLLING FORK/SHARKEY-ISSAQ	\$36,551
DUMAS/BENTON-TIPPAH	\$36,041
FBC LEXINGTON/HOLMES	\$35,767

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$250,000 - \$499,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC BALDWIN/LEE	\$102,275
MIDWAY/LAUDERDALE	\$101,627
FBC PURVIS/LAMAR	\$98,926
LONGVIEW HEIGHTS/NORTHWEST	\$90,593
STATE BOULEVARD/LAUDERDALE	\$74,471
FBC ELLISVILLE/JONES	\$74,415
TATE/ALCORN	\$68,741
MONTICELLO/LAWRENCE	\$67,079
TYLERTOWN/WALTHALL	\$67,006
FBC QUITMAN/CLARKE	\$66,897

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$500,000 - \$999,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC WINONA/MONTGOMERY	\$158,750
FBC KOSCIUSKO/ATTALA	\$155,089
WEST HEIGHTS/PONTOTOC	\$154,479
FBC GREENVILLE/WASHINGTON	\$150,435
FBC BATESVILLE/PANOLA	\$145,333
FBC YAZOO CITY/YAZOO	\$138,198
EMMANUEL/NORTH CENTRAL	\$131,668
FBC AMORY/MONROE	\$130,615
NORTH OXFORD/LAFAYETTE	\$129,445
FBC HOUSTON/CHICKASAW	\$126,121

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$1,000,000 & ABOVE

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC JACKSON/METRO	\$891,774
FBC BRANDON/RANKIN	\$446,146
CALVARY/LEE	\$347,250
COLONIAL HEIGHTS/METRO	\$342,046
BROADMOOR/METRO	\$275,726
FBC COLUMBUS/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	\$262,386
MORRISON HEIGHTS/METRO	\$252,671
FBC CLINTON/METRO	\$241,020
HARRISBURG/LEE	\$230,692
FBC MADISON/METRO	\$209,794

Church Offering Categories based on undesignated gifts reported on the Annual Church Profile



## A BAD MIX

Recently, I was talking with one of our fine young pastors and his bright son. The boy is in the midst of the challenges of first grade academics. As we visited, I asked this sharp, young intellect what he had learned at school that day.

He looked at me, shrugged his shoulders, squenched up his mouth, and answered, "Nothing that I can think of!"

"You mean you didn't learn anything today?" I replied. He shook his head no.

His dad wanted to investigate the situation further, so he asked the question again, this time with special emphasis, "All day, in all the classes, what do you remember that you learned?"

It was then that his son's eyes lit up and he said, "Oh yea, I did learn something!" The father now seemed pleased and relaxed in the knowledge that his son had not spent the entire day at school without learning one thing!

"Well son, what did you learn?" his father asked.

"I learned that you should not drink a Pepsi while you are eating a sour gummy worm!"

To that statement I asked, "Do what?" The boy, recognizing that I wasn't very bright, restated his revelation by explaining what had taken place.



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

"Today I was eating a sour gummy worm and I took a big swallow of Pepsi, and yuck, it tasted terrible!"

While the father was less than thrilled, his first grade chemistry lesson made sense to me! I thought it was probably a lesson that young man would carry with him through life — further than a lot of things he would learn in the first, second, or third grade classroom.

In fact, if you think about it, you could probably go on to get your Ph.D. and no one would ever take the time or feel it important enough to teach you not to drink a Pepsi while you are eating a sour gummy worm!

Now, without a doubt, you will run into that truth in other ways and on other days — that some things just don't mix! If you try to mix them, it just messes everything up.

It is not hard to see that principle lived out in spiritual things as the Apostle Paul warns the

church at Corinth about being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. He said, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, sayeth the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17).

The Lord is instructing us that whether we realize it or not, or want to believe it or not, there are some things that just do not mix. A winning spiritual walk cannot be stirred together with the wicked influences of this world and ever produce a good result. Sin mixed into any feature of life results in ruin.

It's not uncommon to meet folks these days who believe that sin, committed in moderation, is okay. The problem is, there is no such thing. Sin, in any shape and variety, is full-blown and deadly. It is like talking about cancer in moderation, or sky diving without a parachute in moderation, or holding onto a hot wire of 50,000 volts in moderation.

When sin's power and devastating consequences are understood, such thinking is absurd.

A few years ago, one of our Mississippi pastors, Clarence Cooper of Emmanuel Church in Grenada, experienced the fact that you can't mix the wrong things and have it come out right.

He was eating breakfast at a restaurant with his brother and some other friends. He had ordered some pancakes and was looking forward to chowing down on some good, hot pancakes covered with syrup.

The pancakes arrived, steamy hot, with butter on them, and Cooper picked up what he thought was a pitcher of syrup and proceeded to pour milk all over his pancakes.

The result was not a very appetizing sight. There he sat with perfectly good pancakes soaked in milk, and now neither the milk nor the pancakes tasted good!

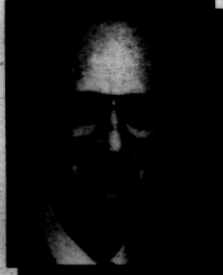
When the church is infused with a dose of the world, there is likewise an unwholesome, unhealthy, odd-looking concoction that is unappealing to Heaven or earth.

Maybe each of us should have a revealing moment like my first grade buddy who discovered it's not good to drink a Pepsi while eating a sour gummy worm!

## L. Gordon Sansing dies at age 87

L. Gordon Sansing, 87, of Meridian, died March 13. Services were held March 15 with burial in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Sansing was pastor of Center Ridge Church, Kemper Association, and director of senior adults and staff consultant for Westwood Church, Meridian.



Sansing

Other pastorates include First Church, Lake; Springfield Church, Scott Association; Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie; First Church, Brandon; First Church, Booneville; Crestwood Church, Jackson; Broadmoor Church, Jackson; First Church, Grenada; Arrowood Church, Collinsville; and Goodwater Church, Lauderdale Association.

Sansing also served the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board from 1957-69. His areas of service included secretary of Cooperative Missions Department; associate executive secretary; and director of the Evangelism Department.

Sansing was a graduate of Clarke College, Mississippi College, and New Orleans Seminary. The 1999 Mississippi Baptist Convention Annual was dedicated to him.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Polly Sansing; sons, Tom O. Sansing of Collinsville, Gordon H. Sansing of Forest, and Tim Sansing (deceased); five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to The Baptist Children's Village by calling (601) 922-2242; to Westwood Church, Meridian, building renovation fund, (601) 482-3283; or to Center Ridge Church, Kemper Association, by writing RR 3, Box 173, DeKalb, MS 39328.

## NOBTS launches campaign, promotes Mississippian

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — In addition to celebrating Chuck Kelley's fifth anniversary as president of New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS), trustees were involved in campus improvement activities, such as the official public inauguration of the seminary's capital campaign, during their March 13-14 meeting.

Trustees joined Foundation Board members, faculty, students, and staff in a special March 13 chapel service publicly launching the "New Horizons: Equipping Leaders to Change the World" campaign. This is NOBTS's fund-raising effort to revitalize its campus, provide for a multitude of student needs, and continue to carry out its mission to provide Southern Baptists a theological education that will make a difference.

A four-phase project that will span over two decades, the New Horizons campaign was approved by NOBTS' trustees in March 1999, by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in the spring of 2000 and by messengers to the SBC annual meeting last June in Orlando.

The public phase begins with Phase I of the campaign, which has the fund-raising goal of \$8-12 million over the next three years to fund the following priorities: Bunyan Classroom Building (\$2-2.5 million), the refurbishing of the seminary's main classroom building because of extensive termite damage; Student Family Village (\$4-6 million), much-needed student housing; and endowment (\$2-3.5 million) for scholarships for students and their children, faculty/staff development, and academic program enrichment.

In an effort created to raise the profile of issues relating to the seminary's facilities and to give maintenance issues a more significant place in its strategic planning process, trustees elected Chris Friedmann, the seminary's director of facilities/maintenance for the past seven years, as associate vice president of operations.

In what is labeled "The Excellence Initiative," named after the seminary's core value of "Characteristic Excellence," trustees also approved the addition of one new maintenance staff position a year for the next five years; the establishment of an "Excellence Fund," an endowment fund with its interest earnings to be spent only on maintenance of the seminary's facilities and grounds; and the establishment of permanent

Maintenance Priority Task Force, consisting of the president, vice president for business affairs, provost, dean of students, and the associate vice president of operations, who will meet on a monthly basis to determine maintenance needs and priorities, ensuring direct involvement of the president, and providing a way for the concerns of both students and faculty to be represented in decisions.

Trustees approved the 2000-2001 budget, which includes an average 3% raise for seminary faculty and staff, and a modest increase in the maximum tuition cap. Explaining that the maximum tuition cap will be raised from \$1,200 to \$1,300, Vice President for Business Affairs Clay Corvin pointed out that NOBTS students still save about a combined \$825,000 to \$850,000 a year because of its existence, compared to the other six seminaries that have removed the cap.

In other news, trustees elected Tate Cockrell, former director of ministries for the Fort Worth-based Dawson McAllister Association, as instructor in psychology and counseling.

Cockrell, of Laurel, was appointed as the seminary's director of student enlistment last December.

Cockrell earned his bachelor of science degree in psychology from Baptist-affiliated William Carey College in Hattiesburg, in 1994 and master of art degrees in marriage and family counseling and in religious education from Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1997. He anticipates receiving his doctor of philosophy degree in psychology and counseling from Southwestern in December 2001.



Cockrell



CHANGE THE WORLD — Birmingham physician Philip Walton shares about his involvement in New Horizons: Equipping Leaders to Change the World capital campaign at New Orleans Seminary. (BP photo by Doy Cave)



# Ag. Missions Fellowship expanding BCV project

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

The Mississippi Baptist Agricultural Missions Fellowship (AMF) is expanding a highly successful pilot program conducted last year that provided truckloads of fresh vegetables for the residents of Baptist

Children's Village (BCV) facilities around the state.

The call is going out for gardeners, farmers, ranchers, and others who can donate fresh produce, meat products, and the use of land and equipment.

"The focus of the project is to help BCV lower their food cost. Also, we want to create more interest in agricultural missions," said Frank Prewitt of Belzoni, a catfish producer and AMF member who spearheaded the pilot project.

Pilot project volunteers cultivated and harvested crops throughout the spring and summer of 2000 on parcels of privately-owned farmland in the Mississippi Delta. The use of the farmland was donated, but not the farmland itself.

Members of Phillipston Church, Sidon, and Immanuel Church, Greenwood, were among those who pushed the pilot project to a bountiful conclusion. Hundreds of gallons of fresh corn and peas were delivered to BCV.

"Donations from the AMF volunteers have dramatically impacted our \$7,000 per week food budget," BCV executive director Ronnie Robinson said at the time. "Donations of corn on the cob and... peas mean more vegetables we will not have to purchase."

Prewitt said the involvement of Mississippi Baptists is crucial to the expansion of the program.

"This is all done with volunteer help, so it's important that Mississippi Baptists get involved in this project for the benefit of our BCV children. Volunteers will be needed, along with donations of the use of land and equipment," Prewitt pointed out.

Prewitt said there are many ways for Mississippi Baptists to get involved.

"An individual can donate food on their own, or donate the use of their land and equipment. An association can take this on as a mission project. Churches can do this as a fresh food mission project," he said.

Prewitt cited Matt. 25:40 (NIV) as the driving force behind the project: "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

The Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and Men's Ministry department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board will coordinate the statewide effort to expand the BCV project. For more information, contact the following people at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, or toll-free at (800) 748-1651:

• Tammy Anderson, WMU consultant. Direct telephone number: (601) 292-3323. E-mail: tanderson@mbcb.org.

• Carol Wright, ministry assistant in the Men's Ministry department. Direct telephone number: (601) 292-3335. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

Prewitt can be contacted at Route 3, Box 40, Belzoni, MS 39038. Telephone: (662) 247-1560.

## Baptist Children's Village food usage in last 12 months

Fish Filets	1100 lbs.
Beef	11,300 lbs.
Pork	5,700 lbs.
Chicken	11,500 lbs.
Vegetables	14,800 lbs.
Fresh Vegetables	2,800 lbs.
Eggs	2000 doz.

Source: Ag Missions F'ship

## Baptists to open homes during SBC

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Ministers and missionaries planning to attend the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) — but facing tight budgets — are being offered lodging in the homes of New Orleans Baptists.

The housing assistance is being sponsored by the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans and the Local Arrangements Committee helping to plan the June 12-13 SBC annual meeting in the Louisiana Superdome.

The guest housing will be available beginning Sunday night, June 10, for attendees of such pre-SBC meetings as the Pastors' Conference and Woman's Missionary Union. Some housing also may be available for participants in the Crossover New Orleans evangelistic outreach June 9.

The host families are not being asked to provide meals, and no pets can be housed, but applicants are asked to note any handicaps or other special needs.

Requests should be sent by May 1 to New Orleans Baptist Hospitality, 9220 Jefferson, New Orleans, LA 70123; e-mail, fbck1@compuserve.com; or fax, (504) 737-8101.



Cagle, Roberts, and Ransier

Marty Roberts (center), youth minister of Ingram Church, Baldwin, was ordained to the ministry on March 4. Charlie Ransier, pastor, (right), brought the charge to the church, and Mark Cagle (left) brought the charge to Roberts.

Mt. Moriah Church, Bruce, presented a plaque on March 4 to Brooks Brasher for his 44 years of service as deacon. Pictured, from left, are Max Price, pastor, and Brasher.

Lewis E. Rhodes, minister, died March 21 at his home in Memphis, Tenn. He was receiving hospice care in his home which he shared with Edwina, his wife of 60 years. Churches he pastored in Mississippi were Mt. Moriah and Mt. Pleasant

in Lincoln County, and Daniel Memorial in Jackson. Rhodes was a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary. Graveside services were held March 22 at Memory Hill Gardens in Bartlett, Tenn. A memorial service was held March 23 at the Church of the River, Memphis. The family has requested that

any memorials be sent to the Haiti Medical Missions of Memphis, 1779 Kirby Parkway #1 PMB 355, Memphis, TN 38138 in memory of Rhodes and in recognition of his physician, Gordon Kraus and hospice nurse, Chuck Kolesar who are members of the Haiti Medical Mission Team.

Sid Johnson, minister of music and education, at Woodville Heights Church, Jackson, celebrated his fifth anniversary on March 4. The church honored Johnson and

The Johnsons

his wife Nell Rose (pictured) with a reception following the evening service.

Terrica McBride was recognized on March 18 for having 13 years of perfect attendance at Utica Church, Utica. John Ed Snell is pastor.



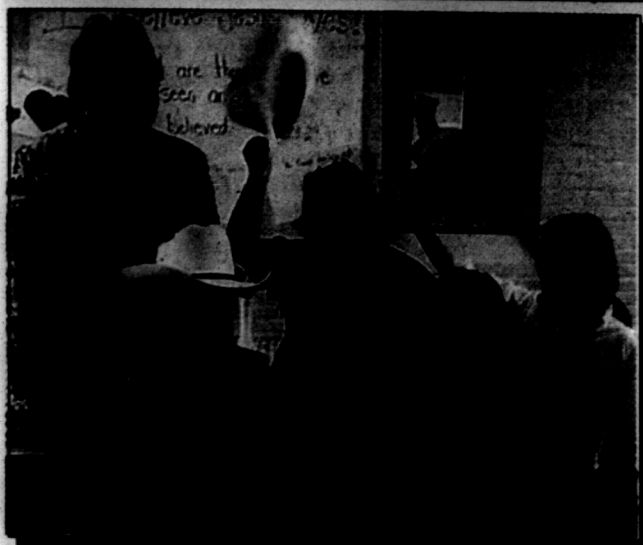
Price and Brasher

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



GAs of Union Church, Meridian

GAs of Union Church, Meridian, held a western round up to conclude their February study of missionaries in Texas. As a mission project, the GAs elected to send toiletries to Jim

Feb. 25. Pictured (from left) are Dewayne Joyner, J&J contractors; Hal Bates, pastor; T. S. Pigford, Billy Max Gressett, Roy Stevens, Ginger Summerlin and Rod Hitt, building committee.

Putnam to be used in his ministry to seafarers in Freeport, Texas. GAs are Brittany Taylor, L a N a y Jackson, Kayla Riley, and M a l a u r i e Robinson. The leader is Libby Riley.

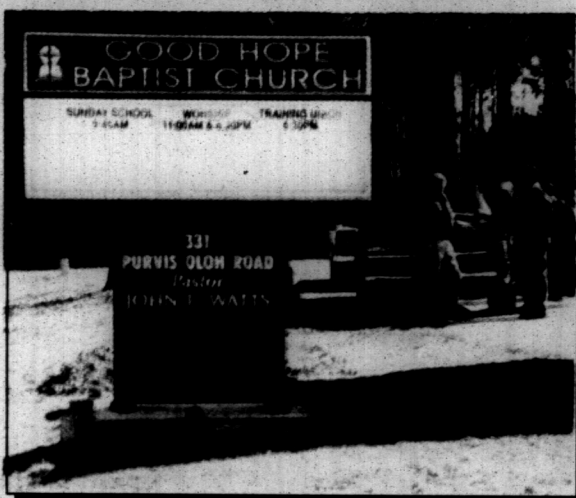
**Ground breaking services** were held at First Church, Collinsville,

Harperville Church, Scott Association, held a ground breaking ceremony for a multipurpose building on Feb. 18. The building will include a fellowship hall, kitchen, two classrooms, and rest rooms. Pictured are Pete Shepherd, chairman of the building committee; Hal Patterson, building committee; Parkes Marler, interim pastor; C h a r l i e Montgomery, chairman of long-range planning committee; Martha Ellen Marler, building committee; and Randy Hall, building committee.



Ground breaking ceremony at Harperville Church, Scott Association

**Good Hope Church, Purvis,** recently purchased and installed a new church sign. Each week a new message is placed on the sign and the sign also gives the time of the services. Pictured in the background are John E. Watts, pastor; Wendell Hudson, chairman of the building and grounds committee; and the men who helped to set up the sign.



Good Hope Church, Purvis

**The Women on Mission of First Church, Pascagoula,** had a Women's Celebration on Feb. 10. This was their first celebration in the new century. Invitations were mailed out to ladies who had joined the church in the last two years. Chrystelle Thames, public relations representative from the Baptist Children's Village conducted an informative slide presentation. Pictured (from left) are Thames and Ellon Yancey, wife of Rex Yancey, pastor.



Thames and Yancey

**Carterville Church, Petal,** will celebrate its 75th anniversary throughout the month of April. Activities planned are: April 1 - emphasis on families, former pastor Norman Smith and former choir director Charles Walker, special guests; April 8 - remembering the past, former pastor James Pitts, special guest; April 15 - resurrection celebration, with selections from Experiencing God, the Musical, performed by the sanctuary choir under the direction of Tim Hubbard, minister of music; April 20 - adult banquet, special guest J.J. Jasper of American Family Radio in Tupelo; April 22 - attendees are encouraged to dress in clothing reminiscent of the 1920's, old-fashioned dinner on the grounds and singing following morning worship, concert by Jones County Junior College of Laurel; April 29 - William Clawson, special guest; evening service will feature a Dessert Cafe, Bo Parker, special guest; For more information, contact Carterville Church at 1115 Carterville Road, Petal, MS 39465. Telephone: (601) 584-9457. E-mail: Tim Hubbard at the church's web site, [www.cartervillebaptistchurch.org](http://www.cartervillebaptistchurch.org).



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3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

*But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).*

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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**FOXWORTH FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,** Foxworth is seeking a full-time minister of music and youth. Send resume to Foxworth First Baptist Church, c/o Minister of M/Y Search Committee, P.O. Box 45, Foxworth, MS 39483. For more information call the church at (601) 736-4401.

**FULL-TIME FINANCIAL SECRETARY.** Raymond Baptist Church, Raymond, Miss. Computer experience a must, knowledge of Shelby system beneficial. Fax resume to (601) 857-0931.

**POSITION AVAILABLE** - full-time minister of music and youth. Housing available. Thirty minutes away from Memphis. Send resume to Slayden Baptist Church, 2534 Highway 72, Lamar, MS 38642 or call (662) 252-4559 or (662) 252-4520; fax (662) 252-5248; e-mail [sbchurch@dixie-net.com](mailto:sbchurch@dixie-net.com).



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



The children's department of First Church, Lauderdale, collected money and gifts for the Baptist Children's Village and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Pictured (from left, front row) are Lisa Johnson, John David Brashier, Taylor Gregory, Sarah Brashier, Brittany Pearson, Casey Litchfield; (second row) Daniel Warner, Sara Wyche, Gregory Talbert, Matthew Brashier, Kevin Moes, Timothy Weldy, Lacey White, and Charlotte Bishop, director. Jerry Bishop is pastor.

**Homecoming**  
Calvary Baptist Church, April 1, 11 a.m. service, with Howell, music, lunch in fellowship following morning service.

### Clarke College homecoming set for April 28

Clarke College Alumni Association will sponsor "The Family of God," an alumni gathering day and homecoming for former students and their spouses at Calvary Church, Newton, on April 28. Don Redmon, featured speaker, will address the topic of missions. Class gatherings and Alumni Center visitations will occur in the afternoon. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with the program starting at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon at a cost of \$8 per person. Reservations are necessary and will be taken through April 23. Call Sara Fox at (601) 774-5274; Johnny Lollar at (903) 839-5096; Evelyn Williams at (601) 646-5960; or visit [www.clarkecollege.com](http://www.clarkecollege.com).

Barnes Crossing Church, Saltillo, will host Bubba Kennedy and family on April 1 at 11 a.m. He will bring the morning message and the family will sing. J. D. Johnson is pastor.

Earnie Perham and family will be at Old Union Church, Shannon, on April 1. Services will begin at 6 p.m. followed by a potluck supper. Kenneth Kelly is pastor.

Country Woods Church, Jackson, will present the School of Puppetry and Creative Ministry Workshop, April 5, from 6-9:30 p.m. For additional information, call (601) 371-7955 or (800) 854-2151.

Cardiovascular Associates, located in the Colonnades medical office building on the Baptist Medical Center campus, recently became the first facility in Mississippi to install the Enhanced External Counterpulsation (EECP) treatment system for the crippling chest pain of angina pectoris. Potential EECP patients must be referred through a Cardiovascular Associates physician. Earl Fyke III, M.D., is a cardiologist who serves as medical director of the EECP program. For more information about EECP, or to find out whether you may be a candidate for the treatment, call Cardiovascular Associates at (601) 969-2860. Information about EECP may also be found on the Internet at [www.naturalbypass.com](http://www.naturalbypass.com).

Hope Church, West Point, will hold a dedication service April 1 for its new sanctuary/education building. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m., with a covered dish luncheon following. There will be an open house from 2-4 p.m. This is the seventh anniversary of the church. Avery Jones is pastor.

First Church, Richton, and the W.A. Moser Golden Circle Sunday School class honored couples that have been married for at least 50 years. The couples were given special recognition during service on Feb. 11. Pictured, from left, are Wilson and Tee Falgout, Alton and Bonnie Walley, Elmer and

Bobbie Hillman, Charles and Katherine Bush, Conoy and Merle Williams, Keith and Eleana Cochran, Howard and Doris Touchstone, and Hobart and Hazle Daniels. Not pictured are Talmadge and Jessie Freeman, Maurice and Lula Belle Hinton, and Es and Brunell Walley.



Members of First Church, Richton

### STAFF CHANGES

L. C. Anthony has accepted the call as interim pastor at Society Hill Church, Oakvale.

Kokomo Church, Kokomo, has called Jerrel Pounds as pianist and Dianna Pounds as music director.

Byron Wilkinson accepted the call as pastor of Glading, Magnolia, on Jan. 14. Charles Kirkfield retired from Glading Church on Nov. 5 after serving for 19 years.

Rolling Creek Church, Quitman, has called Michael Soesbe as pastor effective March 12. Soesbe previously served at Mt. Olive Church, Smithdale.



The Pounds

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September 15, 2001

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# Quilts & blankets comfort and encourage

EPWORTH, Ga. (BP) — What do these three people have in common?

• Eight-year-old Sarah was waiting for her surgery in the pre-operative area of the Scottish Rite Hospital. Sarah had been diagnosed with a brain tumor.

"There were seven kids having surgery and it was bedlam," her father John Walton recounted. "She was sitting in my lap and understandably frightened."

At the door to the cubicle appeared Sarah's pastor, Tom Jordan. In his hand was a teddy bear blanket, which Sarah immediately reached for. She was wrapped in the blanket while they prayed. The blanket has continued to be a great source of comfort to Sarah. It has accompanied Sarah to all of her appointments and was even spread over her during an MRI test.

• Peggy, meanwhile, suffers from a degenerative spine condition that has forced her, at age 52, into retirement. In the last two years she had had two major surgeries. Her hand-stitched lap quilt provides comfort both physically and spiritually. "I take it with me to doctors appointments. Offices can be too cool due to air conditioning and often I have to sit waiting for a doctor for several hours," she said.

• Every night when Eric's mother tucks him into bed, she lays his lap-size quilt over his blanket. "He is having a hard time with the death of his father and why God would take his dad," his mother said. "The quilt made teaching him that God loves him a nightly affair."

All three are recipients of a lap quilt or blanket from the quilt ministry of First Church,

Epworth, Ga. All of the blankets and quilts have been prayed over and represent a desire by the church ladies to share the love and healing of Jesus Christ.

Every other Tuesday the ladies meet and work at two quilt frames. Not everyone in the ministry quilts, but everyone has a very necessary job. One member cuts squares,

while another stitches around the edges of blankets or embroiders squares. Others support the ministry by providing food or the funds to purchase fabric. Lunch is potluck and is attended by pastor Jordan, church secretary Priscilla Jordan and music minister Bart Starr. Tom and Bart are known as good cooks, whose creations are always welcome.

Several kinds of quilts are created by the ladies. Some are hand-embroidered or appliqued with traditional designs on white quilt squares and hand-stitched on the frames - and particularly well-liked by older recipients. Other quilts are store-bought with printed designs and can be hand-stitched or tacked. "It doesn't matter what kind, it's the love and prayers that matter," quilter Ruth Ballew reminded.

The blankets are especially helpful when time is an issue. Since they only require cutting and binding, they can be delivered on short notice.

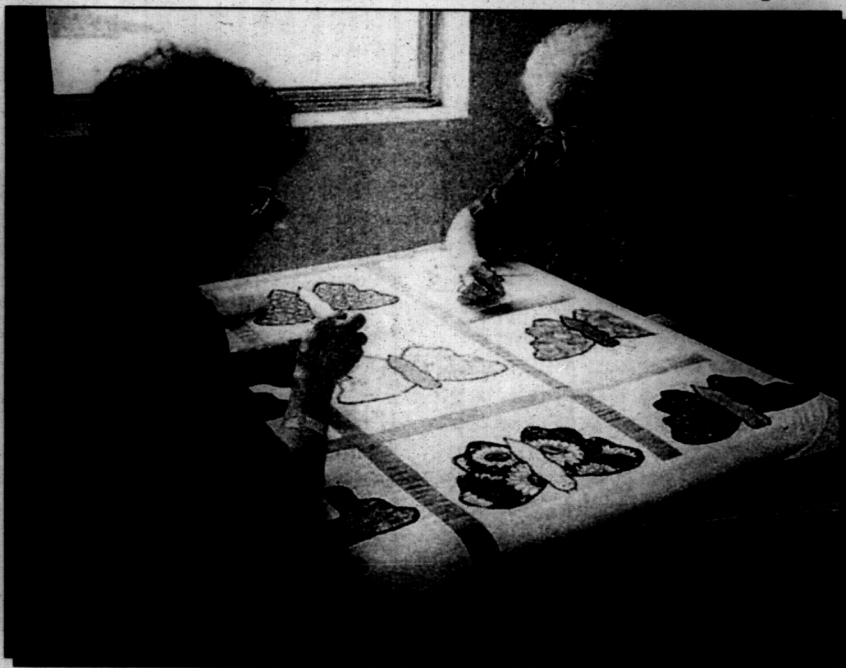
The message attached to each quilt or blanket is direct and sincere: "This quilt was made as an expression of Jesus' love for you. With each stitch we have prayed that this quilt would bring you comfort. When life gets tough wrap yourself in this quilt and remember you are in our prayers."

A blanket sent to a 40-year-old man in Pennsylvania who was dying of cancer and given two weeks to live arrived the day before the funeral. The family, who had recently lost two other family members, was amazed at the love expressed by those who live so far away. The blanket was displayed at the funeral and now gives comfort to his widow.

Carol, meanwhile, received a blanket for a friend in Texas who was dying of cancer. It was to be her last visit to her beloved friend. Several days into the visit Carol noticed that her friend had pulled the blanket up to her face. "Are you cold?" she asked. "No, it just feels so soft and warm."

A bulletin board at First Church displays photos of the quilts and notes of thanks.

"Each time I use my lap quilt, I think of the time that was put into it," Jonnie writes. "Your thoughts and prayers made the anxious hours before surgery and while waiting for the results a lost easier to bear."



CARING BY QUILTING — Ruth Ballew and Helen Thrantham work on a quilt. (BP photo by Kathleen Thompson)

## REVIVAL DATES

**Neely, Union County Association:** April 29-May 4; Bill Wages, Corinth, evangelist; Kenny Adair, pastor.

**Immanuel, Vicksburg:** April 8-11; Sunday, 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Richard Holden, Alcoa, Tenn., evangelist; Lois Jane, Henderson, Tenn., music; Billy Brumfield, pastor.

**Cleary, Florence:** April 8-11; Sunday, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Steve Hale, evangelist; Tim Moak, music.

**Wess Chapel, Louisville:** April 15-19; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 7 p.m.; Bill Bozeman, Mobile, Ala., evangelist; Steve and Becky Carner, One Way Ministries, music; Charles Rook, pastor.

**North Columbia, Columbia:** April 1-4; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Jim Futral, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Mark Thompson, Lumberton, music; Mike Grenn, pastor.

**Macedonia, Meridian:** April 1-4; 7 p.m.; Gary Rivers, Oxford, Ala., evangelist; Travis Watkins, Newton County, music; Jason Gross, pastor.

**First, Magee:** April 8-11; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Clark Stewart, Crystal Springs, evangelist; Jerry Sullivan, pastor.

**Ebenezer (Holmes):** April 1-4; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; lunch at noon; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Sanders, Ala., evangelist; Denise Sanders, pianist; Skipper Maxwell, music; Billy Barron, pastor.

**Concord, Yazoo City:** April 1-4; Sunday, 11 a.m., noon meal, and 1:30 p.m. service; Mon.-Wed. 7:30 p.m.; Matt Buckles, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Bill and Martha Martin, Benton, music; James Yates, pastor.

## SWBTS trustees OK \$1M increase

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — In the face of a possible \$1 million decrease in funding at Southwestern Seminary, the seminary's trustees approved a \$1 million budget increase during their spring meeting March 6 at the Fort Worth, Texas, school.

Southwestern President Kenneth S. Hemphill called the 3.4% budget increase "a normal increase."

"We are budgeting conservatively," he said of the \$29.6 million budget.

Last year, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) voted to redirect approximately \$4 million from the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries to three seminaries in Texas. Southwestern stands to lose about \$1 million, or about 3.4% of the seminary's total budget.

While he's not anticipating a major loss in funds from the potential BGCT budget reduction, Hemphill said, "It's too early for us to try to project that. I don't know how all of these things will sort out."

Calling the seminary "financially healthy," Hemphill added he does have faith that God will continue to meet the financial needs of Southwestern through local churches.

In their morning meeting March 6, trustees elected Michael Dean, pastor of Travis Avenue Church in Fort Worth, as their new chairman. They also elected David Allen of Dallas to be vice chairman, and re-elected Matthew McKellar of Tyler, Texas, as secretary.

2001 SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Responding to the Gospel

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

By Lori Clendinning

R.S.V.P.

These familiar initials stand for the French phrase "Repondez vous, s'il vous plait."

Literally translated, it means, "respond (you), if you please." Translated into today's vernacular, it simply means "Please let me know if you're coming." Responding promptly to invitations is the polite and proper action to take.

Today, responses are solicited from a plethora of sources: jury duty notices, tax audits, and military call-ups demand immediate attention or legal complications will follow. Cell phones, door bells, and ambulance sirens all clamor for our attention, too.

Likewise, the daily mail bombards us with flyers, circulars, and pamphlets while television and radio stations relent-

lessly blare commercials. All of these hope to procure financial responses from us regarding their advertised products: "ACT NOW! THIS OFFER WON'T LAST!"

However compelling they may be worded or contrived, none compare with the urgency of the heavenly invitation that God places before us. Nothing is more important than our earthly responses to his heavenly invitation.

This week's lesson focuses on a parable that highlights the different ways in which people respond to God's invitation to eternal life.

A parable, as noted by the Greek word from which it is borrowed, signifies a comparison, conveying literally the notion of putting things side by side, whereby their resemblance will be perceived



Clendinning

(Hovey's Commentary). Jesus often chose to speak in simple and profoundly wise parables, adopting this common teaching method from the Old Testament and the Jewish teachers of that region.

A parable allowed Jesus to reveal a spiritual truth to his disciples and those among the multitude who "had ears to hear" without directly offending those who might otherwise be incited to display violent hostility toward him.

The Matthew 13 parable, commonly called the "parable of the sower" or the "parable of the soils," is also recorded in Mark and Luke. It is one of thirty to fifty parables used by Jesus (the difference in number being whether scholars determined an illustration to be a metaphor or a parable).

Ordinarily, a parable is used to illustrate one point. Likewise, this parable has one point: it serves as a prophecy of the Gospel's reception. The different soils represent the different responses individual souls make to Christ's Gospel.

Throughout this passage the faithful sower remained the same. The seed was good. The difference in the harvest was found in the quality of the soils upon which the seed was cast.

The seed upon the path: life's circumstances have hardened these souls to a state of indifference. They have allowed everything life offers to walk over them. Only God's plowshare of tragedy can break up this stubborn soil.

The seed upon the rocky places: a rocky ledge lies beneath a veneer of good soil. Lacking depth, these shallow souls display sentimental fervor and an instant response: the wheat "springs up." The zeal soon flags, however. They wither when trouble or persecution occur. Only God's diamond-head drill of long-patient suffering can penetrate to allow the roots of maturity to flourish.

The seed among the thorns: this seed is found among "dirty soil." These souls have the potential to be splendid Christians. They are planted in good soil. However, they lust for the world and, though drawn to Christ, will not relin-

quish worldly connections. Only repentance and surrender into God's thorn-scarred hands can transplant them into a thorn-free environment where they can bear fruit.

The seed within the good soil: these seeds produced a harvest which brought pleasure to the sower. Each seed had its own return — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Likewise, individuals will have varying amounts of fruitfulness for Christ. Genuine believers will translate their heartfelt convictions into mature acts of faithfulness for Jesus' sake using the talents, abilities, and opportunities he grants them.

Fruitful souls hear the Word willingly. They understand it and respond to it in true commitment and faith. True believers are changed by the power of God within and fulfill his commission.

Christ's Gospel seed has been sown in our fields. Is it fertile ground? Are we fruitful for him? If not, time to R.S.V.P.

Remember: Act now! This offer won't last!

Clendinning is a former newspaper editor and a member of Park Place Church, Pearl.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Change

1 Samuel 8:1-10:27

By Jim Burnett

Human beings, for the most part, are creatures of habit. We have our way of doing things and do not take it well when we are forced to change or try something different. Variation makes us nervous, pulling us from our comfort zones. It requires us to rethink our situation and make adjustments.

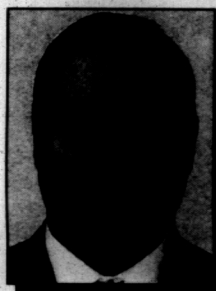
God's people must realize Christianity involves constant change and transformation. We are being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. This process is known as sanctification, and sometimes this procedure can be painful and very uncomfortable.

**Facing change (8:1-6).** The prophet Samuel and the nation of Israel were about to undergo a tremendous change in their governing structure as they

shifted from a theocracy (God ruling over them) to a monarchy (a king ruling over them). The prospects of this transition troubled Samuel. He became angry at the people's request for a king to replace his sons as judges.

Unfortunately Samuel had made the same mistake of Eli, his predecessor, when it came to parenting — he failed to correct his sons' wickedness. Scripture portrays Samuel's sons as wicked judges who perverted justice. This caused the people of Israel to want a king. Samuel was furious and took his anger to God in prayer.

As God's people we must practice the discipline of prayer, especially when facing change. We must consult God for his will and his guidance. Often instead of praying for



Burnett

God's direction and clarification about a situation, we kick and complain, gathering like-minded sympathizers around our cause. Sometimes we are so quick to shoot down anything that hints of breaking with tradition we miss God in the process. Samuel took his concerns to the Lord and so should we. He stated his case before God and came away with a different perspective.

How open are you to change? Do you recoil when you are challenged to do things differently? How do you handle situations where you are forced to adapt? Let me encourage you to seek God's leadership in times of change. He will empower you to embrace the change as he did with Samuel.

**Understanding change (8:7-9).** The people's request for a king offended Samuel. But God quickly reminded the prophet that the nation's request for a king was a personal rejection of God. They, in essence, were asking Jehovah to step down

and aside and let them do things their own way. Israel rejected God their maker, their protector, their deliverer — desiring a substitute.

Amazingly, after Samuel warned of the severe consequences of replacing God as divine king and crowning a human king, Israel remained determined to do so. They took little thought of how their desire to be like all the other nations would affect their families, their cities, and their properties.

Sometimes as Christians we are bent on doing things our own way, showing no regard or respect for God's will just like the Israelites. We live life from our own agendas, our own desires, our own plans, ignoring God all together. But there are always consequences to self-centered living. In fact, the Apostle John warned that when believers make it their aim to emulate the world they become enemies of God.

Therefore, before you and I make decisions and step forward into different directions let's be sure to consult God through prayer. We must not

lean on our own understanding, for our minds and hearts are deceiving. God, however, will direct our steps and bless our ways if we submit our lives to him.

**Accepting change (10:20-21, 24).** One does not have to live long on this earth to conclude that there is much in life that is out of his or her control. Samuel must have felt a little helpless in the sense that he had not been able to persuade the people against wanting a king. Yet as we see in these passages, he did not hesitate to obey God in anointing Saul as Israel's new monarch even in the face of this unsettling change.

Samuel knew from experience that God had never misled him. Therefore, he was able to follow the Lord's instructions to anoint Saul at Mizpah before the people. How confident are you in God's leadership? Are you ready and willing to accept direction from God even though it means doing things differently?

Burnett is pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,

no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.





# PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES



VOLUME 10 • A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

ISSUE 1

POSTMASTER: SEND NO MONEY

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

ISSN 1041-2923

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Bill and Barbara walk out of the divorce court with shattered dreams and uncertain futures. Jerry, a trusted teacher, is fired after twenty years of outstanding service. Nick, a staff member in a Southern Baptist Church, is dismissed by the personnel committee even though he was considered to be the best youth minister the church had ever had. Pete is on death row awaiting execution because of a series of murders. These tragic situations seem to be unrelated but further investigation reveals a common thread — pornography.

The Internet has brought "the seamy side of town" into our homes, schools, libraries, and even churches. Cyberporn sites are the envy of the Internet. These sites are taking in millions of dollars a month with virtually no restitution. Crimes against children are on the rise. Angela Bell, a FBI spokeswoman, states that in 1996 they opened 113 child exploitation cases compared to 1,487 cases in 1999. Because of the complexity of web addresses and how they are linked, it is difficult to estimate how many porn sites are on the Internet but current thought is between 40,000 and 100,000 and growing.

How can you protect your family? Use a filtering service. Make sure you have one at home and then check with your local library to see if they are using filters on their computers. If not, get your community involved and insist this be done. Also, add a filtering service to your church computers.

There are many quality filtering services. One such service is marketed by our convention. It is LifeWayonline.com. It is a full-service ISP that blocks objectionable material before it reaches your home. For more information visit <http://info.lifewayonline.com> or call (888) 454-5965.



Porter

## The Trap of Lust

Scripture Memory Verse: "I will set before my eyes no vile thing" (Psalm 101:3a).

**FACT:** There are now at least five times as many hard-core pornography outlets in America as there are McDonald's restaurants.<sup>1</sup>

**DEFINITION:** Pornography comes from the Greek word "pornographos" and means "to write about prostitutes." Pornography exists today in many forms: magazines, books, Internet, phone sex, strip clubs, pay-per-view, and videos. It is estimated that 44% of teenagers have visited sexually explicit sites.<sup>2</sup>

### WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

Some visible consequences of pornography are epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) including AIDS, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, divorces, rapes and abortions. Pornography is a major factor in the destabilization of family life in America. It trivializes human sexuality and confuses sexual fantasies with the truth about human nature.<sup>3</sup>

Incest, sodomy, and bestiality are major themes in pornography today. Pornography is hate literature. The overarching theme of all pornography is that all women desire to be taken by force. This is called the "rape myth." According to this myth, when a woman says "no," she really means "yes."

### A FOUR-STEP PROGRESSION

For some, pornography quickly moves from fascination to addiction. Studies by Victor Cline, a researcher at the University of Utah, show a four-step progression among men who get hooked on porn:

**Exposure.** Once exposed to pornographic materials, they get hooked and keep coming back for more.

**Escalation.** There is an escalation in need for harder, more shocking material to get the same sexual stimulation as before.

**Desensitization.** What was once shocking becomes, in time, acceptable and commonplace.

**Acting Out.** There is an increased tendency to act out the sexual activities in the porn viewed, usually victimizing women and children.<sup>4</sup>

### WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

U.S. v. Roth (1957) and Miller v. California (1973) established the obscenity standard and 29 major cities and one state (Utah) have eliminated hard-core pornography by using these laws.

Pornography is just about everywhere. The United States now has over 20,000 outlets selling prosecutable hard-core pornography that would be found illegal by educated citizens in most American communities.

While each category of illegal pornography has a specific legal definition established by the courts, some short-hand explanations can help you understand the differences.

### ILLEGAL PORNOGRAPHY

• **Obscenity** — hard-core graphic material that is obsessed with sex and/or sexual violence, obviously offensive, and lacking in serious value.

• **Child Pornography** — material picturing children under 18 engaging in sexual activity: primarily an underground cottage industry. It is a crime scene record of a child's sexual abuse.

"Patrick Naughton was an executive with the Disney company who got busted for possessing child pornography. Naughton was caught because he appeared for a rendezvous on the Santa Monica pier with someone he thought was the 13-year-old girl he had been cultivating through an Internet chat room.

Instead, he found that his pen-pal (e-pal?) was an FBI agent. On September 16, 1999, a federal jury convicted Naughton of possessing child pornography, though it deadlocked on other charges. Disney fired him."<sup>5</sup>

1.3 million children a year are sexually abused. An estimated 61% percent of sexual assault victims are

under the age of 18. The average age of child sexual abuse is 11, although some predators strike upon children much younger.<sup>6</sup>

• **Harmful to Minors** — Materials sold or displayed to children under 18 that is unhealthy or unwholesome, obviously not suitable, and lacking in serious value for children.

• **Broadcast Indecency** — Includes messages or pictures on telephone, radio or broadcast TV that are offensive, descriptions or depictions of graphic sexual content.

### LEGAL PORNOGRAPHY

• **Erotic or Semi-Nude** — "soft-core" — widely and readily available commercially. While this type of pornography is legal, it is still morally wrong.

Despite many clear court decisions, obscenity, indecency, and harmful material are widely distributed. Illegal pornography is under-investigated, under-prosecuted, and under-sentenced. Work is needed on the federal, state, and local levels to strengthen laws and see that they are vigorously enforced.<sup>7</sup>

## What does the Bible say?

• **Determine not to be involved.** (Psalm 101:3-4) "I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil."

• **Discipline your eyes.** (Job 22:27-30) "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully. What is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Most High? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for the doer of evil? Does He not see my ways and count my every step?"

• **Guard your tongue.** (James 3:1-12) "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have the divine power to demolish arguments and every pretension that opposes the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

• **Practice self-control.** (1 Corinthians 6:12-18) "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."



If you are interested in receiving Christian Action updates via the internet and will share information with friends and your church, please e-mail us at [rwood@mbcb.org](mailto:rwood@mbcb.org). Include your name, address, phone number, and church name.

<sup>1</sup>Light; The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. March-April 1998, page 2.

<sup>2</sup>Baptist Press. 3/21/00 Internet pornography frequented by 20% of U.S. adults, studies show. By Ken Walker.

<sup>3</sup>Pornography: The Issue. Published by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. June 1993.

<sup>4</sup>Facts and Trends. March 1999. Page 14

<sup>5</sup>The Clarion Ledger. "Child Porn Faces Supreme Court." Monday, January 24, 2000, by Mona Charen, page 7A.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore... Periodical of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. "The Harms of Pornography." Vol. 9, Num. 1, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>[www.enough.org/reefs.htm](http://www.enough.org/reefs.htm)



## Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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BXAMA IHANXEXY IHY  
AIRY MHQG VXE, RC  
QVGM WHXNXAQ QVX  
URCQ GC UGY, IHY NVG  
RQ RA QVIQ AIRQV QG  
QVXX, URPX FX QG  
YERHW; QVGM NGMDYX-  
AQ VIPX IAWXY GC VRF,  
IHY VX NGMDY VIPX  
URPXH QVXX DRPRHU  
NIQXE.

BGVH CGME: QXH

Clue: B = J

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Four: Forty-Three.

# Ross: true love can't wait in youth ministry

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — The mother sat in his office with painful news. She was taking a risk speaking to him, not knowing whether he would accept or reject her.

"Richard," she began, "a hallmark of your ministry has always been your warmth and positive encouragement of teenagers, but that has diminished as of late."

"Encouragement has been replaced by pressure and pushing from you. The teenagers feel they don't measure up to your expectations and that you are pushing them away by your displeasure."

After that meeting, Richard Ross, a youth minister in Dallas at the time, recalled sitting in his car and weeping because he knew the mother was right — and he knew the main reason for the change.

For years, Ross and his wife Lajuana had wanted children. When they learned she was pregnant with twins, the Rosses were overjoyed. The twins never cried or laughed in the nursery room the Rosses had carefully prepared with two of everything. The twins died before birth, and Ross responded as "the typical, stoic male," never grieving or healing.

Regardless of the reason for the change, that experience cemented in Ross a lesson he had long known — when ministering to teenagers, true love cannot wait.

He immediately called together the teenagers, and they had a time of tearful sharing and restoration.

"Over 30 years, I believe my unconditional love and my per-

sonal expressions of love to each teenager in a youth group has been the foundation for ministry," Ross said.

"Teenagers quickly learned," he continued, "that if they became pregnant, started drinking, or even thought my youth events were silly — it might break my heart, but it would not break my love for them."

Ross will soon be joining the youth ministry faculty at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

From 1984 to 2000, Ross served with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention as national consultant for ministers of youth. Along the way, he has written 20 books and

contributed to teen-oriented tape series and software applications. In 1993, he coordinated the first signings of True Love Waits pledges at a Nashville church. The sexual abstinence program for teenagers has grown phenomenally, spreading across the nation and around the world. In connection with True Love Waits, Ross has been interviewed by nearly every major U.S. television network news program and newsmagazine and numerous newspapers.

A year ago, Ross co-chaired YouthLink 2000, the largest youth event in Southern Baptist history. About 1,200 teenagers made professions of faith, 10,000 made commitments to be lifetime missionaries if God leads, and 5,000 committed



TRUE LOVE — Richard Ross leads the True Love Waits sexual abstinence campaign, and is the latest addition to the youth ministry faculty at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. (BP photo by Morris Abernathy)

their lives to be ministers and church leaders.

Wherever he has gone, he has remained true to his calling to youth ministry — and not just in an indirect way, but by intentionally remaining involved in the lives of teenagers. After moving to a new home in Fort Worth, Ross did what he has done whenever he has had a home built — no interior walls on the second floor.

"We value a large space just for teenagers," Ross said. The one-room second floor now is equipped with a pool table, pinball machine and other amenities teens would appreciate.

His dedication to teenagers extends beyond providing a place for them to hang out. Ross understands the need to

stay engaged in teens' lives and to see the world from their perspectives.

"The teenagers in 2001 want to change the world," he said. "They will drift away from the church filled with adults who simply want to entertain teenagers, to hand teenagers ready-made events on a silver platter. They will drift toward churches that understand they have the gifts and abilities to make an impact for the kingdom and who move them to the front lines of ministry."

At Southwestern, Ross said his first priority is to prepare youth leaders "to live and minister in anticipation of revival if our sovereign God should choose to send revival rather than judgment."

## 'Why did you create me?' author initially asked

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Cheryl Green is a soon-to-be-published author and, moreover, a living miracle, having survived disability, emotional and physical abuse, poverty, homelessness, parental mental illness, and racism.

Green is the author of "Child of Promise: One Woman's Journey from Tragedy to Triumph," with a foreword by Bob Dole, former majority leader in the U.S. Senate. The book is slated for May 1 release by Broadman & Holman Publishers, the trade publishing division of LifeWay Christian Resources.

She will add that achievement to her Ph.D. studies at Yale University, work with the Dole Foundation for the economic independence of Americans with disabilities, and her role today as president and CEO of Green Oaks Mental Health Foundation in Dallas.

The circumstances of her early years, however, gave no indication of a basis for successful adulthood. Born, in her own words, "a sight to behold," Green was diagnosed with arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, a condition in which her legs did not develop properly before birth.

"It was a shock to everybody," she told participants March 15 in the National Seminar for Church Librarians, sponsored by LifeWay in Nashville, Tenn. "My lower limbs were malformed to the point that they just looked like a ball of flesh."

Much of her childhood was spent in hospitals for reconstructive surgeries and examinations by medical professionals, who, she recalled, seemed more interested in her impairment than in her as a person.

Both of her parents suffered mental illnesses. Her father proclaimed himself to be God's anointed one and engaged in abusive behavior. Her mother's paranoid schizophrenia rendered her unable to work and led to an attempt on Cheryl's life. Ultimately, her father lost his job, and the once-middle-class African American family became homeless.

"Circumstances set me up to believe a lie," she said. "I thought my future depended solely on my own abilities."

While still a teenager, a school classmate invited Green to a church youth group event. That proved to be the beginning of a deeper relationship with God.

"I had some questions for [God]," she recalled. "Why did you create me? Why did you create me like you did? Why did you create me with these parents? Do you love me? If you love me, why don't I feel it?"

She said two Scriptures changed her life — Jeremiah 29:11 and John 9:1-3. Faith in God, rather than in herself, put her on a better life path.

Green and her mother are now close friends, and she manages her mother's financial and medical affairs. She was able to confront her father about his past abuse, but he died before their relationship could be reconciled.

"It is a daily struggle to leave the past in the past," she admitted, adding that when she began to trust God, "I realized that I needed to choose to let go of the burdens before God could take them away."

While she also acknowledged "not many people blossom in adversity," she added, "I am triumphant, not because I achieved earthly success, but because abuse, loneliness, and despair were not powerful enough to destroy or embitter me. In my long sojourn, I have discovered God is never far away."

**Editor's Note:** *Child of Promise: One Woman's Journey from Tragedy to Triumph* will be available in May in LifeWay Christian Stores and other retail outlets.

HIS CREATION — Cheryl Green spoke with media ministry directors at LifeWay Christian Resources March 15. (BP photo by Charles Willis)